1-1-1960

The "old swinger" serves Marco motorists

Hampton Dunn

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud_pub

Part of the American Studies Commons, and the Community-based Research Commons

Scholar Commons Citation
http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud_pub/2814

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Digital Collection - Florida Studies Center at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Collection - Florida Studies Center Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.
THE "OLD SWINGER" SERVES MARCO MOTORISTS

By HAMPTON DUNN

GOODLAND --- For more than 30 years, the "Old Swinger" has served the motorists of Marco Island, and for a long while it was virtually the only access to the mainland after the ferry to Old Marco Village was discontinued many years ago.

The hand operated swinging bridge, working on similar principle and machinery to the old railroad roundhouses, is a momento of olden days. In fact, it is one of the last hand operated swing bridges left in Florida.

Actually the Goodland Bay bridge is older than the last generation. It served Fort Myers and its span over the Caloosahatchee River prior to 1937. That year it was loaded onto a barge and towed to the eastern edge of Marco Island.

There the Public Works Administration constructed roadway and bridge for a total of $120,000 (depression era dollars). No. 120, as the span was designated, was opened to the public in January, 1938. The swinging bridge pours motorists onto Marco Island right at the entrance to the tiny village of Goodland, on State Road 92.

Since December, 1969, a high-rise bridge at the northeast corner of Marco Island, joins the mainland, and shortens the distance to Naples to 16 miles. A similar bridge is to replace the old swing bridge at the east end of the island one of these days.

A "landmark" along with the swinging bridge is its operator, a husky fellow with a strong back whose name is Ivan Burley. Three blasts of the horn from approaching yachts, fishing boats, sailboats and other vessels heading for the Gulf of Mexico or sailing northward toward the Marco island springs the operator into action.

He first brings down the wooden gates at either end of the bridge and turns on the signal lights. Then at the center of the swinging section he pulls up two large levers to disengage both ends of the bridge from the understructure, freeing the bridge to swing clear. A huge crank, about eight feet long and weighing 90 pounds, is fitted into a turning pin and gradually opens the span.